

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

July 9, 2004

The Honorable J. Dennis Hastert
Speaker
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Speaker:

We are writing to ask for a meeting to discuss how we can work together for a straight 10-year reauthorization of the semi-automatic Assault Weapons Ban (AWB) *before* it sunsets on September 13, 2004. This leaves us with only 17 legislative days to act.

We considered, during debate of the fiscal year 2005 Commerce, Justice, State Appropriations bill, to offer an amendment reauthorizing the AWB. Instead of debating the extension of the ban on the House floor, we are appealing to you in hopes that you will prevent the expiration of the of the 1994 semi-automatic Assault Weapons Ban.

The American public is becoming increasingly aware of the pending expiration of this ban, and extensive polling reflects that 76 percent of Americans strongly support its reauthorization. For this reason, we cannot ignore any opportunity to ensure that the Assault Weapons Ban is reauthorized to keep UZIs and AK-47s out of the hands of children and criminals.

There are many on either side of this issue who would like this ban to expire, without debate. Upon expiration, supporters of the ban will surely highlight Congress' failure to act, bringing the issue to the forefront of the 2004 elections. The expiration of this ban is already well on its way to becoming a major issue of minority propaganda. We believe that removing this volatile issue from campaign attacks will benefit the Republican Party immensely.

There is, without a doubt, strong support from Republicans in both the House and Senate to extend the ban. There are even some who did not vote for the ban 10 years ago who support its renewal. This decision shows courage and a deep commitment to keeping America's streets safe. As you know, the President has clearly indicated that he is willing to sign the extension into law when Congress passes such legislation.

Every major law-enforcement organization in America supports an extension of the ban. Law enforcement led the fight for the original assault weapons ban because of the threat these weapons posed to police officers and public safety. According to our Department

of Justice data, the proportion of banned assault weapons traced to crimes has dropped by more than 65 percent since 1995.

We have introduced H.R. 3831 as a compromise. Other bills have been introduced to renew the ban on semi-assault weapons; one seeks to extend the ban permanently and another is far more sweeping in the types of guns it outlaws. We believe that a simple reauthorization of current law is the sensible solution.

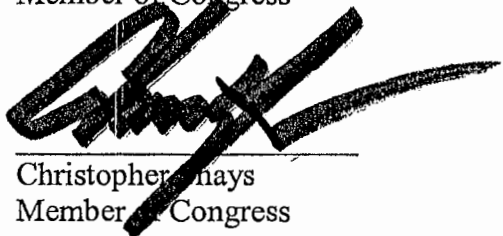
The AWB has been in effect for nearly a decade and not one hunter has lost his right to hunt, nor has one citizen lost his power to defend his home. We have proven that the Second Amendment can thrive while we take limited and reasonable measures to protect Americans from gun violence.

We respectfully request that you will meet with us to discuss extending the ban on semi-automatic assault weapons before September 13. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,



Michael N. Castle
Member of Congress



Christopher Shays
Member of Congress



Mark Kirk
Member of Congress



Michael Ferguson
Member of Congress

cc: Majority Leader Tom DeLay
Majority Whip Roy Blunt